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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001527

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AF FOR B. NEULING
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: NCA MARCHES, MADHUKU ARRESTED

REF: A. HARARE 1512
[B](#). HARARE 1509 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) On November 7, National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) Chairperson, Lovemore Madhuku, told poloff that demonstrations planned for November 4 (reftel) had gone well. As a result of NCA tactics and their own declining morale, police response to the demonstrations had been weak and fewer demonstrators had been arrested than in the past. Madhuku said the GOZ was accusing NCA members of bombing a police post during the demonstrations, but the NCA believed security forces had staged the bombing to discredit the mass action. The NCA was planning to hold another demonstration next week. In late breaking news, police arrested Madhuku on November 8 and he is being held without charges. End Summary.

NCA Calls Demonstrations a Success

[1](#)2. (C) NCA Chair Lovemore Madhuku told poloff that NCA held demonstrations in Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Masvingo, and Gweru on November 4 to protest the creation of the Senate and to call for a new constitution. Madhuku said that in Harare the protest had taken place at two times. First, a core group of 150-200 people had participated in the morning, then a larger group of 300-400 had demonstrated in the afternoon. The idea was to mislead the police with the smaller demonstration in the morning so that they would be slower to react to the larger demonstration later in the day. The demonstrations in other cities had attracted about 200-250 participants each.

[1](#)3. (C) Madhuku said a total of 16 were arrested in Harare, 20 in Mutare, and one in Bulawayo - fewer than were normally arrested. Many of those had already been released. Fourteen remained in custody in Harare and six in Mutare. Madhuku said the NCA's tactics were responsible for the relatively weak police response. The police had been surprised by the second Harare demonstration and had been slow to react.

[1](#)4. (C) Madhuku added that even though the NCA had made no secret of the demonstration the police had not aggressively

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followed NCA activists, in stark contrast to past practice, and had therefore been relatively unprepared. In addition, the police who had responded had been less confrontational than in the recent past. Typically police would be present in large numbers in the expected area and immediately begin beating and arresting demonstrators. This time police did not prevent the demonstration from beginning, and they only began beating and arresting participants after they had marched. Madhuku said this had led to fewer arrests because the demonstrators, confident that they had achieved their goal, had run when they saw the police.

[1](#)5. (C) The government-sponsored press, including the Herald and the Sunday Mail newspapers reported that NCA members threw a gasoline bomb at a police post during the demonstrations. Madhuku said that the bombing had occurred after the demonstrations and after the police had already arrested NCA demonstrators. He suspected security agents were themselves responsible for the bombing in an attempt to discredit the demonstration.

More Demonstrations Planned

[1](#)6. (C) Madhuku said NCA was planning another demonstration for sometime next week. NCA officials were waiting to see the results of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions demonstration scheduled for November 8 (septel). Madhuku was particularly interested to see if the police reaction to the ZCTU event was similarly weak or if the press reporting on the bombing energized police. He said more violence would be

good because it would expose the police for the vicious people they were.

Update: Madhuku Arrested

17. On November 8, the NCA released a statement saying that late on November 7 police had unsuccessfully attempted to arrest Madhuku, who had been out, at his home. They had subsequently contacted him by phone and ordered Madhuku to turn himself in to Harare Central Police Station. In a follow-up phone conversation, an NCA spokesperson told poloff that Madhuku had gone to the police station at 8 a.m., and police had held him there since without charges, although the NCA understood that the charges would be related to Saturday,s demonstration. (N.B. The police are also reported to have arrested ZCTU Chairman Wellington Chibebe and 50 of his supporters on November 8 while they were conducting a protest march of their own.)

Comment

18. (C) The NCA demonstration would seem to have been a successful trial run for the series of mass actions planned by the opposition MDC and its civil society allies (reftels). Madhuku generally overstates the size of his events but we had independent reports as well that it was larger than usual and that the police response was less forceful than usual. The NCA,s tactics, while clever, could be a less important part of the explanation for the police response. The decline in police morale and efficiency brought on by the GOZ,s financial difficulties will inevitably begin to erode their ability to suppress dissent and we may have seen the first sign of this coming to pass. Far from squelching the protests, Madhuku,s arrest along with that of Chibebe could very well help spark further demonstrations. End Comment.
DELL